

PHI 197: HUMAN NATURE
FALL 2025
TIME: MONDAY & WEDNESDAY 12:45PM – 2:05PM
LOCATION: HB CROUSE 213A

Instructor: Roger Rosena

Email: rdrosena@syr.edu

Office Hours: By Appointment

Course Description: In this course we will be discussing various topics related to what defines us as humans. Questions include: What is a mind? What is happiness? How do we relate to other humans? What are things like gender, race, and sexuality? What does it mean to be free?

In the process of investigating these questions, you will learn how to think and write philosophically. By the end of this course, you will be able to articulate your philosophical beliefs clearly and concisely, construct and defend positions, and reason persuasively.

This course is a writing intensive course. This means that writing is an extensive part of the grade and your grades will be linked to the quality and content of your written work. The key goal of this class is to develop your voice as a writer, and to develop critical thinking and reasoning skills as a thinker.

Course Material: All readings will be made available electronically and posted on Blackboard. It is your responsibility to make sure that you read the material and ask questions if necessary.

Technology: The use of technology is permitted and encouraged. However, this use is intended for the purpose of enriching the classroom experience. What this means is that non-classroom related activities (ex. texting, social media, buying clothes, etc.) is not tolerated. These activities are disrespectful to me and a distraction to the students around you. If you have an emergency and use your phone or other items, please step out of the room first.

Attendance and Class Participation: I expect that you will attend every class and arrive on time. You will not do well in this class unless you show up to this class. In this course, attendance also means that you are not only *physically* present, but you are also *actively engaging* with the course material. Your participation grade will be based primarily on the quality and quantity of your engagement in the class. If you are sick or have a legitimate reason for missing class, let me know as soon as possible.

Academic Integrity: As a pre-eminent and inclusive student-focused research institution, Syracuse University considers academic integrity at the forefront of learning, serving as a core value and guiding pillar of education. Syracuse University's Academic Integrity Policy provides students with the necessary guidelines to complete academic work with integrity throughout their studies. Students are required to uphold both course-specific and university-wide academic integrity expectations such as crediting your sources, doing your own work, communicating honestly, and supporting academic

integrity. The full Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy can be found by visiting class.syr.edu, selecting, “Academic Integrity,” and “Expectations and Policy.”

Upholding Academic Integrity includes the protection of faculty’s intellectual property. Students should not upload, distribute, or share instructors’ course materials, including presentations, assignments, exams, or other evaluative materials without permission. Using websites that charge fees or require uploading of course material (e.g., Chegg, Course Hero) to obtain exam solutions or assignments completed by others, which are then presented as your own violates academic integrity expectations in this course and may be classified as a Level 3 violation. All academic integrity expectations that apply to in-person assignments, quizzes, and exams also apply online. Students found in violation of the policy are subject to grade sanctions determined by the course instructor and non-grade sanctions determined by the School or College where the course is offered. Students may not drop or withdraw from courses in which they face a suspected violation. Any established violation in this course may result in course failure regardless of violation level. All academic integrity expectations that apply to in-person quizzes and exams also apply to online quizzes and exams. In this course, all work submitted for quizzes and exams must be yours alone. Discussing quiz or exam questions with anyone during the quiz or exam period violates academic integrity expectations for this course.

All generative-AI tools are prohibited in this course because their use inhibits achievement of the course learning objectives. This policy applies to all stages of project and writing processes including researching, brainstorming, outlining, organizing, and polishing. Do not use Generative-AI tools to create any content (i.e., images and video, audio, text, code, etc.). If you have any questions about a feature and whether it is considered Generative-AI, ask your instructor.

This class will use the plagiarism detection and prevention system Turnitin. You will have the option to submit your papers to Turnitin to check that all sources you use have been properly acknowledged and cited before you submit the paper to me. I will also submit all papers you write for this class to Turnitin, which compares submitted documents against documents on the Internet and against student papers submitted to Turnitin at Syracuse University and at other colleges and universities. I will take your knowledge of the subject matter of this course and your writing level and style into account in interpreting the originality report. Keep in mind that all papers you submit for this class will become part of the [Turnitin.com](https://turnitin.com) reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers.”

Accommodations: Students who are in need of disability-related academic accommodations should register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS), 804 University Avenue, Room 309, 315-443-4498. Please provide me with a current Accommodation Authorization Letter from ODS so I am aware of your accommodations. Planning for accommodations as early as possible is best. I'd be happy to meet with you to discuss how I can help.

Religious Observations: The university recognizes the diversity of faiths represented in the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, staff to observe religious holy days according to their tradition. Under this policy, students have an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance, provided they notify the instructor no later than the end of the second week of classes for regular session classes and by the submission deadline for flexibility classes.

Guidelines for Classroom Behavior: I intend to have a civil and inclusive classroom throughout the semester. A positive learning environment relies upon creating an atmosphere where diverse perspectives can be expressed, especially in a course that focuses on a variety of controversial issues. Each student is encouraged to take an active part in class discussions and activities. Honest and

respected dialogue is expected. Disagreement and challenging of ideas in a supportive and sensitive manner is encouraged. Hostility and disrespectful behavior are not tolerated.

Just as we expect others to listen attentively to our views, we must reciprocate and listen to others when they speak, especially when we disagree with them. However, in this class, our emphasis will be on engaging in the mutual exploration of issues as presented in the course readings as scholars rather than in defending points of view we have formed outside of the classroom.

Grading and Evaluation: *I expect all assignments to be turned in on time. If you have any issues, let me know in advance*

10% Attendance and Participation

40% Unit Assessments/Quizzes: 5 in total [worth 8% each]

50% Short Papers: 4 in total [worth 12.5% each]

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D	F
100-93	92-90	89-87	86-83	82-80	79-77	76-72	72-70	69-60	59-0

Course Schedule: *This schedule may change and all changes will be communicated through Blackboard and email*

8/25: Introduction to the Course

No Readings

UNIT 1: THE HUMAN MIND AND PSYCHOLOGY

8/27: Intro to Moral Psychology

Plato – The Republic Book IV (pgs. 1067-1072)

9/3: Intro to Moral Psychology (cont.)

Sigmund Freud – The Anatomy of the Mental Personality

9/8: Metaphysics of the Mind

Rene Descartes – Meditations on First Philosophy (1st Meditation)

9/10: Metaphysics of the Mind (cont.)

Rene Descartes – Meditations on First Philosophy (2nd Meditation)

Elisabeth of Bohemia – Letters to Descartes of May 6, 1643 (pgs. 61-62)

9/15: Metaphysics of the Mind (cont.)

Alan Turing – Computing, Machinery, and Intelligence (pgs. 433-435 & pgs. 450-451)

QUIZ 1 DUE 9/19

9/17: TBD

UNIT 2: WELL-BEING, HAPPINESS, AND FLOURISHING

9/22: What is a Human's Function?

Aristotle – Nicomachean Ethics I.7

9/24: What is Happiness?

John Stuart Mill – What Utilitarianism Is

9/29: Can We Learn from Pain and Suffering

Havi Carel, Richard Pettigrew, and Ian James Kidd – Illness as Transformative Experience

PAPER 1 DUE 9/26

10/1: Should We Want to be Immortal?

Bernard Williams – The Markopoulos Case: Reflections on the Tedium of Immortality

10/6: Animal Wellbeing and Happiness

Peter Singer – All Animals are Equal

QUIZ 2 DUE 10/10

UNIT 3: SOCIAL AND POLITICAL RELATIONS

10/8: Are Humans Always in Competition?

Thomas Hobbes – Selections from The Leviathan

Ruger Bregman – The Real Lord of the Flies

10/13: NO CLASS – FALL BREAK

10/15: Are Humans Always in Competition?

Hobbes (cont.) & Class Activity

10/20: Love and Happiness?

Carrie Jenkins – Love Isn't About Happiness. It's About Understanding and Inspiration

PAPER 2 DUE 10/24

10/22: Friends and Enemies?

Sara Protasi – Love Your Frenemy

10/27: Work and Labor

Karl Marx – Alienated Labor (pgs. 85-91)

Video David Graeber on Shit and Bullshit Jobs

QUIZ 3 DUE 10/31

UNIT 4: PERSONAL AND SOCIAL IDENTITY

10/29: What Makes Us Who We Are?

Marya Schectman – Personal Identity and the Past (pgs. 1-6) & Class Activity

11/3: What Makes Us Who We Are? (cont.)

Marya Schectman (pgs. 6-14)

Jay Garfield – Why There Is No Self: A Buddhist View for the West

11/5: Gender and Identity

Simone de Beauvoir – Intro to Second Sex (pgs. 1-4 & 34-38)

11/10: Race and Identity

Charles Mill – What Race are You Really? (pgs. 50-66)

PAPER 3 DUE 11/14

UNIT 5: FREE WILL AND MORAL RESPONSIBILITY

11/12: Making Sense of Free Will

Adina Roskies – Neuroscientific Challenges to Free Will and Responsibility

11/17: Genetic Engineering and Determinism

Michael Sandel – What's Wrong with Enhancement?

QUIZ 4 DUE 11/21

11/19: Compatibilism

Harry Frankfurt – Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person

11/24 AND 11/26: NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING

12/1: Hard Determinism

Derk Pereboom – Hard Incompatibilism (Sections 1, 4, 10-11)

12/3: Free Will and Moral Responsibility (cont.)

Gary Watson – Responsibility and the Limits of Evil: Variations on a Strawsonian Theme (pgs. 127-130)

12/8: Free Will and Moral Responsibility (cont.)

Gary Watson (pgs. 130-132)

QUIZ 5 DUE 12/12

PAPER 4 DUE 12/15